



Simply MAYBERRY

INSIDE

**PILOT MOUNTAIN
AND THE CRUISE IN**

**BLUE RIDGE MUSIC CENTER
AND FIDDLER'S CONVENTION**

WAS MAYBERRY IN NC?

**LOCAL CONCERTS, EVENTS,
RECIPES AND MORE**

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What's INSIDE

4 WELCOME TO MOUNT PILOT
Discover what the community of Pilot Mountain has to offer and see what events are happening in the coming months.

7 PILOT CRUISE IN
Happening monthly from May-October, the Cruise In is one of the oldest and largest around!

9 SIMPLY RECIPES
Local residents and fans of the Andy Griffith Show share their favorite home-cooked meals with readers.

10 BLUE GRASS, COUNTRY, BLUES & JAZZ
The roots of American music, which grew from the iconic fiddle and banjo playing came from the Blue Ridge region, and Mount Airy became home to these genres of music.

12 MOUNT AIRY FIDDLER'S CONVENTION
The Blue Ridge Music Center features plenty of live music, exhibits, and a telling of the history of old time and blue grass music. And every year, one of the most venerated gatherings of musicians takes place with the Mount Airy Blue Grass and Old Time Fiddlers Convention.

14 THINK MAYBERRY WAS ALWAYS IN NORTH CAROLINA? NOT SO FAST...
It wasn't obvious at first that Mayberry was a North Carolina town, and that's how Creator Sheldon Leonard wanted it. See how Andy Griffith was able to place Mayberry in his home state.

18 CALENDAR OF EVENTS
View a list of local concerts and events happening in Mount Airy and the surrounding communities.

COVER PHOTOS: Sandy Bowman, kneeling, snaps a picture of her grandson, 19-month-old Hank Bowman, as he plays behind the wheel of his grandfather Tim Bowman's 2006 Nextel Cup Chevrolet.

Fiddles galore! One of many vendors with his product on display during a Mount Airy Blue Grass and Old Time Fiddler's Convention.

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ADVERTISER'S INDEX

AMERICAN HEALTHCARE SERVICES, INC.....	2
BARN STAR.....	7
C & B LUMBER.....	15
ECONO LODGE.....	7
MAYBERRY DRIVE-IN	5
MOUNT AIRY BUSINESS ASSOCIATION.....	13
MOUNT AIRY EQUIPMENT CO., INC.	20
MOUNT AIRY MUSEUM OF REGIONAL HISTORY	5
MOUNT PILOT ANTIQUE MALL.....	3
MULLINS PAWN SHOP & JEWELERS.....	19
SNAPPY LUNCH	11
THE DERBY RESTAURANT...	19

The Mount Airy News

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Brent Hiatt of Ararat smiles while holding his son Brexton, 2, who doesn't quite seem to know what to make of the animated tyrannosaurus rex replica snarling at him during the 2022 Prehistoric Pilot Mountain event. (Tom Joyce | Simply Mayberry)

Welcome to MOUNT PILOT

John Peters

Simply Mayberry Magazine

For Andy Griffith Show fans, it's a familiar name, a jumping little town southeast of Mayberry, although exactly how far is a little murky — in some episodes it's just 12 miles, while in others it's an hour's drive. Maybe the longer drive is in Barney's car.

While we never get a clear picture of how big Mount Pilot is, the town seems to be larger than Mayberry. It's the home of the Fun Girls, the location of Mr. Hendricks, Aunt Bee's butter and egg delivery man. It's the location of the swindler and chop shop owner who tried to swindle Barney out of \$300 when she sold him a lemon of a car. Several other references throughout the show's television run

makes it seem that Mount Pilot is larger, with more to do when slow pace of life in Mayberry becomes a little too quiet.

Much like Mount Airy is considered the real-life Mayberry, Mount Pilot has a real-life counterpart as well. The names are even much the same — Pilot Mountain. According to Randy Turner, author of a number of "The Andy Griffith Show" books and newsletters, Andy even wanted to call the fictional town Pilot Mountain, but show producer Sheldon Leonard was dead set against it, so Mount Pilot it became. (For more on this and other information regarding the location of Mayberry, see Turner's article on page 16.)

And yes, Pilot Mountain is about 12 miles southeast of Mount Airy.

But real life offers quite a few differences. While

Mount Airy's population is 10,551, Pilot Mountain's stands at just 1,436. While people in Mayberry often talked about going to Mount Pilot for some big-town entertainment, it's more likely to operate in reverse of that idea in real life.

Well, it was. Lately, though, Pilot Mountain has experienced a resurgence, with a number of festivals and fairs and other activities. Specialty shops — bakeries, restaurants, craft items, antique stores, and more — line Main Street and some side streets.

And it seems there's something going on in town nearly every weekend.

One of Pilot Mountain's biggest and oldest events is the annual Mayfest, held every Mother's Day weekend. The three-day event brings scores of crafters, food trucks and booths, and vendors to town, lining the streets, along with plenty of games and activities and live performances by area musicians.

Thousands of people from this region of North Carolina visit the town each year for the event, with total visitor numbers sometimes exceeding 30,000.

Another long-time gathering is the Hot Nights, Hot Cars cruise-ins, held monthly from May through October.

Cruise-ins seem to be the hot activity du jour, with seemingly every town across the nation holding the gatherings. But Pilot Mountain has been the home of Hot Nights, Hot Cars for more than 40 years, with the rumbling of dozens, maybe more than 100, hot rods and classic cars taking to the streets.

While Mayfest and Hot Nights are two of the town's oldest festivals, there are more than 20 such gatherings in the town each year. The newest of those is Pilot Mountain Outdoor Adventure Festival and Expo, which had its inaugural edition in April 2023, and just marked its second rendition earlier this spring.



Fans of classic and antique cars will get their fill of such automobiles when they roll into Pilot Mountain during the Hot Cars Hot Nights cruise-ins, held the first Saturday of each month, May through October. (File Photo | Simply Mayberry)

A big part of that expo is to bring in outdoor and sporting enthusiasts, along with clothing and equipment manufacturers trying to reach those folks.

"We have the ability to be a base camp for outdoor and agritourism enthusiasts. Our town is uniquely positioned between two beautiful and diverse state parks. We are in close proximity to five rivers, 30 wineries and 10 breweries," said Scott Needham, a Pilot Mountain commissioner and member of the

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Doug Tompkins assists a young girl with a ride on a triceratops during the 2022 Prehistoric Pilot Mountain event. (Tom Joyce | Simply Mayberry)



The festival lights are on over Main Street in Pilot Mountain as diners sit at a long table in the middle of Main Street for Foothills Dinner on Main in 2023. The annual dinner is one of the unique events held in Pilot Mountain. (Ryan Kelly | Simply Mayberry)

Tourism Development Authority, in remarks earlier this year.

Looming over the town is Pilot Mountain, visible from miles in every direction. Pilot Mountain State Park brings in more than 3 million visitors a year. While most of the festivals Pilot Mountain holds targets fans of crafters, food, cars and music, the outdoor expo takes aim at a new demographic — those visiting Pilot Mountain and surrounding area for outdoor activities. Rock climbing, hiking, kayaking, camping, fishing — there’s an entirely new group of folks already in the area who may find Pilot Mountain an enticing town for a visit.

“It’s a really big industry and big business, and people love being outside,” said Brian Eschbach of Richmond, Virginia. He was on hand with the 2024

version of the Expo, operating one of the more than 50 vendor stations set up in downtown Pilot Mountain during the event, April 12-14, who had come from across the region.

Another popular gathering in Pilot Mountain hearkens further back than the days of the Andy Griffith Show — millions of years back, in fact.

Prehistoric Pilot Mountain, slated for June 8, is a popular event featuring Ed’s Dinosaurs Live, a display of animated live-action dinosaurs that are always a thrill for area kids.

The Prehistoric Pilot Mountain display will be making its third appearance this year — after debuting in 2019 and returning in 2022, but this year the event will move to the Armfield Civic Center to accommodate the large crowd.



Thousands flock to Pilot Mountain during its annual Mayfest gathering. (File Photo | Simply Mayberry)



Mike Moran of Pilot Mountain demonstrates the construction of his shaker boxes as interested patrons gather in November 2017. (File Photo | Simply Mayberry)

Other scheduled events for Pilot Mountain in 2024 include:

- Hot Nights Hot Cars Cruise In, June 1
- The Pilot Mountain Pig Out Food Truck Festival, June 21
- Hot Nights Hot Cars Cruise In, July 6
- Hot Nights Hot Cars Cruise In, August 3
- National Night Out, Aug 6
- Labor Day Celebration, Sept. 1
- Hot Nights Hot Cars Cruise In, Sept. 7
- Foothills Dinner on Main, no date yet released
- Hot Nights Hot Cars Cruise In, Oct. 5
- The Pilot Express, Nov. 30
- And plenty of others, including Ladies' Night Out, as well as holiday-themed events. To keep up with the latest information in Pilot Mountain events, visit <https://www.pilotmountainnc.org/vist/page/events>

All of the festivals, fairs, and gatherings, not to mention a new emphasis on growing locally owned businesses in downtown, have moved Pilot Mountain much closer to the destination-town Mount Pilot seemed to be in the Andy Griffith Show.

"Growing up, everyone in Surry County talked about how there were not enough family friendly activities. Our team has worked really hard to change that," Pilot Mountain Mayor Evan Cockerham said earlier this year.

"We've even had folks that have decided to move to our area because they enjoyed the events and our friendly and laid-back atmosphere so much. People want to work, play and live here in Pilot Mountain," the mayor said.

While the fun girls of Andy Griffith Show fame may be long gone, more people than ever seem to be finding Pilot Mountain the place to go for some modern family-safe fun.



This 1965 Pro Street Corvette owned by Kent Jennings of Tobaccoville was recognized as the June Advance Automotive Classic Car of the Month. A cruise-in regular, Jennings says he looks forward to attending each month's event. "I have a lot of friends in this area and the people are great. It's a really nice cruise-in," he said. (File Photo | Simply Mayberry)

There's no mistaking the sound — a deep, baritone-like rumble washing over the landscape. From far away the noise sounds almost like distant thunder echoing among the ridges and hollows. Up close it's clear this is no storm, especially when the driver presses the accelerator, a wall of noise erupting like a roar.

No, there is no mistaking the sound of a car engine.

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Thirteen-year-old Isaac Cockerham of Winston-Salem enjoys watching the classic cars go by while eating watermelon from the tailgate of his parents' truck. (Dean Palmer | Special to the News) – 2021



Classic cars – and plenty of people – line the streets of Pilot Mountain during the 2016 Hot Nights and Hot Cars cruise-in. (File Photo | Simply Mayberry)

Specifically, an engine that powers a classic American muscle car from the heyday of road-borne power, when drivers had hardly heard the phrase miles per gallon, when horsepower and sound and speed were the key elements of an engine.

When those automobiles come rumbling into town, along with their earlier classic cousins, or the more modern hot rods and race cars, there's only one conclusion to be made — Pilot Mountain is experiencing another one of its Hot Nights, Hot Cars cruise-ins.

Today, it seems as if nearly every community has some version of regular cruise-ins, with hot rods, classic autos and muscle cars owned by collectors showing up, putting their autos on display. Some towns see multiple cruise-ins every month of varying sizes, with churches and community groups getting in on the action, all sponsoring their own smaller shows.

But the Pilot Mountain gathering, held monthly from May through October, is not like most cruise-ins.

For starters, it's one of the oldest around, with more than four decades of history behind the event.

And second, it's big. Really big.

Pilot Mountain itself is a small town, with fewer than 1,500 full-time residents. But on Hot Nights weekends, hundreds of classic and souped-up cars roll into town, parking along Main Street, side roads, and forming a constant rumbling parade of the vehicles rolling back and forth through town. Depending upon the weather, visitors for the nights can number in the thousands.

Despite the crowds, the cruise-ins are evocative of another time — a time when life seemed simpler, when Saturday nights could be spent downtown watching cars cruise the main strip, grabbing a hot dog or a milkshake from the local malt shop.

On Hot Nights Saturdays, Pilot Mountain is transformed into that town of yesteryear, with plenty of old-style good food available from local diners, restaurants and vendors; along with plenty of

shopping opportunities at local stores.

But it's the cars that bring in the folks. Always the cars.

Well, that and the music.

While the classic autos are the main draw for many, the group which oversees the cruise-ins, Pilot Mountain Unites — knows that offering something different is key to keeping people downtown once they've seen the cars and eaten the food.

Free concerts, put on by some of the biggest regional bands in the Southeast, seem to be the answer there.

The bands are a constant soundtrack to the cruise-ins, providing classic oldies, modern rock, some country and the ever-popular Beach Music to keep fans happy and, in some cases, busy in the dance floor.

The bands for 2024 offer a little something for nearly every musical taste, with live music from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. during every cruise-in. The May event featured the Part Time Party Band. In June the feature band will be The Entertainers, followed by Gary Lowder and the Smokin' Hot in July.

Blackwater Rhythm and Blues Band is set to take the stage in August, with The Extraordinaires in September, and The Tonez slated to close out the series.

The Hot Nights Hot Cars cruise-in takes place the first Saturday of each month, May through October. The event officially gets underway at 3:30 p.m., but anyone wanting the best viewing and parking spaces should arrive early — the first of the hot rods and classic cars are known to start arriving as early as 8 and 9 a.m.

Music begins at the main band stand at 5:30 p.m. The event and concert are free. Organizers say they work hard to keep this a family-friendly event, thus no coolers or pets are allowed. For more information, visit <https://www.hotnightshotcars.com/> or the group's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HotNightsHotCars/>



Simply RECIPES

The South is known for its tasty, home-cooked meals, and “The Andy Griffith Show” depicted that quite well, particularly with Aunt Bee cooking up roasts, chicken, stews and other delicious food (except for the pickles, stay away from her pickles!).

The real-life Mount Airy and surrounding communities are no different, with plenty of home cooks feeding their families with old-time recipes handed down from generation to generation. To give a taste of Mount Airy eating, here are a few recipes shared by our readers.

Chicken Pie

Submitted by:
Susie Hershey, Yadkinville

Ingredients:

4 breast halves	1 cup flour
2 cup chicken broth	(plain or self rising)
1 can cream of chicken soup	1 cup buttermilk
1 stick margarine	Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Boil the chicken until done and remove from bones. Put in a 9x13 baking dish or use a smaller dish for a thicker pie. Mix broth and soup in saucepan until boiling, then pour over chicken. Break margarine into pieces and mix with flour. Stir in buttermilk with flour mixture to make a thick paste. Spoon over chicken mixture. Season to taste. Bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes or until golden brown on top.

Sausage Muffins

Submitted by:
Greta Hinson, Elkin

Ingredients:

1 cup Bisquick	1 cup of shredded cheddar cheese
1 lb. cooked sausage	
4 eggs, beaten	

Directions:

Mix all ingredients together and put in greased muffin pan. Bake for 20 minutes at 350 degrees. Serves 12 people.

Lemon Lush

Submitted by:
Peggy Webb, Mount Airy

Ingredients for Crust:

1 cup flour
1 cup chopped pecans
1 stick margarine, melted

Ingredients for 2nd Layer:

1 8 oz. cream cheese
1 cup powdered sugar
1 cup cool whip

Ingredients for 3rd Layer:

2 boxes lemon instant pudding
3 cups milk

Directions:

Mix together and press in bottom of 8"x13" pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes. Do not over bake.

Directions:

Mix together and layer over crust

Directions:

Mix and pour over cream cheese mixture

Moist Red Velvet Cake

Submitted by:
Louise Shelton, Mount Airy

Ingredients:

1 cup butter (2 sticks)	1 tablespoon vinegar
3 eggs	2 teaspoons vanilla
2 cups sugar	2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
1 cup buttermilk	1 ½ teaspoons baking soda
1 oz red food coloring	½ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon cocoa	

Directions:

Cream butter and sugar, add eggs. Make paste of cocoa and vinegar. Add butter milk, flour, salt, baking soda and vanilla. Add coloring. Mix well. Bake in greased and floured three-layer pans at 350 degrees until done. Can use Joy spray.

Icing for Red Velvet Cake

Ingredients:

1 ½ cups milk	1 cup sugar
3 heaping tablespoons flour	1 cup flaked coconut or frozen
(self-rising)	1 cup pecans- chopped
2 sticks margarine (1 cup) or butter	1 teaspoon vanilla

Directions:

Cook milk and flour together until it thickens. Put in refrigerator until cold. Beat sugar and margarine or butter until creamy. Add cool custard. Mix and beat on high speed until the consistency of whipped cream. Add coconut, nuts and vanilla. Spread between layers, sides and top of cooled cake layers.

Hash Brown Casserole

Submitted by:
Pattie Reece, Boonville

Ingredients:

32 oz. pkg frozen shredded hash brown potatoes	¼ tsp. pepper
2 cups grated cheddar cheese	1 stick butter
8 oz. sour cream	½ cup bread crumbs
1 can cream of chicken soup	
½ cup onion	
½ tsp. salt	

Directions:

Combined first seven ingredients and ½ cup butter in a bowl. Pour into greased casserole dish. Top with bread crumbs and remaining butter. Bake 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

Do you have a recipe you'd like to share with Simply Mayberry magazine? If so, send it to editor John Peters at jpeters@mtairynews.com. Include contact information should we have questions, and a picture or two, of both the cook and the finished food, would be wonderful!

Blue Grass, COUNTRY, BLUES & JAZZ

John Peters

Simply Mayberry Magazine

All are uniquely American art forms; music that tells the story of the musical development of the nation, combined with words that relate the emotional and cultural history of the country.

No matter where one travels across America, that music, those sounds and stories, aren't far away.

Every one of those musical genres either had their birth here in the Blue Ridge Mountains, or at least passed this way early in their development. And on a clear, warm summer evening, if one listens closely enough, one might just hear the faint sounds of that old time music, echoes bouncing between the ridges and through the hollows for more than two centuries.

Then again, maybe that faint, far off echo isn't some strange time warp. Maybe you're simply close enough to the Blue Ridge Music Center to hear modern-day practitioners of that music, playing and singing songs and telling stories that have chronicled life in these mountain communities across generations.

The Center, located at Mile Post 213 on the Blue Ridge Parkway near the Virginia-North Carolina border, is an unassuming venue, a bit off the beaten path, but it chronicles the roots of American music that developed from the colonial days right on through the 20th century.

Like that American music, the Center itself has changed over the years, evolving and adapting the ways in which it tells its stories. The Center had its beginnings in 2002, with a simple amphitheatre for local and regional musicians to play. Three years

later, a visitor and interpretative center opened, and in 2011 the Center's museum opened, which now features the interactive Roots of American Music exhibit.

Richard Emmett, program director at the Blue Ridge Music Center, can give a quick version of the birth of American music, in describing the center and all it has to offer.

The roots of American music, which grew from the iconic fiddle and banjo playing that came from the Blue Ridge region, was born with the meeting of two very different instruments.

"This music can be traced to the meeting of the African banjo and the European fiddle in the Tidewater area of Virginia," he said in an earlier interview on the Center.

That African banjo is similar to the modern clawhammer banjo, which has a deeper, sometimes more mournful sound than the modern banjo.

"That led to blue grass, the blues, jazz," Emmett said.

The role of the Blue Ridge in all of that is simple — it became home to many of the early practitioners of blue grass, its valleys and mountains and hard scrabble life proving plenty of atmosphere and backdrop for the stories being put to song.

That early music, according to Emmett, began developing in the Tidewater region of Virginia. Many of those musicians migrated west, settling the mountains of western Virginia and North Carolina during the mid and late 1700s, when those mountains were the westward frontier, isolated from the rest of the world.

Those isolated communities formed their own culture, and that is reflected in the music. As the





The Fisher Peak Timber Rattlers are one of several groups which performs during the daily concerts at the Blue Ridge Music Center. (Courtesy Blue Ridge Music Center)



E.V. and Hattie Stonemen, two Carroll County, Virginia, musicians, are among the many musicians whose history is told at the Blue Ridge Music Center museum. (Courtesy Blue Ridge Music Center)



A display telling the history of American music in the Blue Ridge Music Center museum. (Courtesy Blue Ridge Music Center)



Fred Cockerham and Tommy Jarrell, two old time Surry County, North Carolina, musicians who were influential in the development and spread of old time music, are two of the many musicians whose history is told at the Blue Ridge Music Center museum. (Courtesy Blue Ridge Music Center)



Crooked Road Show will be one of the center's featured concert acts in 2024. The group is scheduled to be the featured band during the July 6 summer concert series show. (Courtesy Blue Ridge Music Center)



Nearly daily concerts during the spring and summer months keep the sound of Blue Ridge music alive, and serves as an unexpected treat for travelers stopping at the center. (Courtesy Blue Ridge Music Center)

nation continued growing, spreading west and north, the music went along, changing, evolving, morphing into various genres we know today.

While many of the early practitioners of what would become blue grass and old time music have been largely forgotten by the world, their stories and instruments are alive at the Blue Ridge Music Center.

In addition to the emphasis on musical history, the Center offers modern music and activities as well.

"(Nearly) every day from noon to 3 o'clock, May through October, local and regional performers come in and do some informal presentations in our breezeway, which opens up to the mountains and the fresh air," Emmett said. "That gives us shelter from the rain and weather, but is open to the outdoors."

The daily series began in 2008. Emmett explained some local musicians wanted to start performing there on a daily basis, so the center was certainly willing to give them an outlet.

Early on in May, those concerts are less frequent. Through most of the month there are mid-day concerts every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, as well as some other days. In June, those go to mostly daily

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events, featuring a number of local and regional bands. Among those are Scott Freeman and Willard Gayheart, Jim and Lynn, Erynn Marshall and Carl Jones, the Fisher Peak Timber Rattlers, the Blue Ridge Ramblers, East Nash Grass and The Amanda Cook Band, the Buck Mountaineers, Cedar Ridge, Gen 3, and a host of others.

This daily schedule of music has been key to the Center, Emmett said.

“We get quite a few visitors who come up repeatedly to enjoy that opportunity,” he said, adding it’s also a nice bonus for Parkway travelers who stop in to find a live, free concert going on.

In addition to the daily jams, the center holds a summer concert series featuring bands that play Celtic, Blues, blue grass, old time, folk and other musical genres, often featuring acts that tour the United States and Europe.

The 2024 concert series includes:

- May 25: East Nash Grass + The Amanda Cook Band
- June 1: Caleb Caudle performing with Wild Ponies
- June 8: Chatham Rabbits
- June 15: The SteelDrivers + The Wilder Flower
- June 22: An evening with Tuba Skinny
- July 6: Crooked Road Show
- July 13: David Wax Museum + The Travis Williams Group
- July 2: Fireside Collective performing with Liam Purcell & Cane Mill Road
- July 27: Martha Redbone Roots Project + Zoe & Cloyd
- Aug. 3: The Kruger Brothers
- Aug. 17: An Evening with Steep Canyon Rangers
- Aug. 24: Alison Brown Quintet performing with Wayne Henderson & Friends
- Aug. 31: Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway

The concerts all begin at 7 p.m. in the Center’s amphitheater. Admission charges are different for each show, visit <https://www.blueridgemusiccenter.org/concert-calendar/concert-calendar/?category=28> for more information or to order tickets.

The Blue Ridge Music Center holds other concerts and musical events throughout the spring, summer and autumn, and hosts several hiking trails. Displays there show the history of area music, along with information on individual artists and other displays. It also sponsors a series of concerts in the off-season at different venues in both Virginia and North Carolina.

For more information on the center and its activities, visit <https://www.blueridgemusiccenter.org/>



The convention has been known to draw well-known music celebrities. Jeb Puryear, center, an accomplished fiddler and member of the band Donna the Buffalo, takes a break after performing an old-time tune during a tent-side “concert.” (Tom Joyce | Simply Mayberry)

Mount Airy FIDDLER'S CONVENTION – ONE OF A KIND

John Peters

Simply Mayberry Magazine

The Blue Ridge Music Center, just up the Blue Ridge Parkway from Mount Airy, across the border in Virginia, might feature plenty of live music, exhibits, and a telling of the history of old time and blue grass music.

But no where is it more on display than right in Andy Griffith’s hometown, Mount Airy.

And every year, one of the most venerated gatherings of musicians takes place with the Mount Airy Blue Grass and Old Time Fiddlers Convention.

There are a few such conventions up and down the East Coast which might be a tad larger, and even a couple that are older, but none can boast the pedigree of the Mount Airy event, right in Surry County — home of some of the giants of the field.

The gathering brings musicians from the region,

and fans from all over the world, to Mount Airy the first full weekend of each June. While area hotels often fill up with fans and musicians, there are plenty who just set up camp on the site of the gathering, at Mount Airy's Veteran's Memorial Park.

The gathering consists of musical competitions on various instruments, for individual and group performers — drawing as many as 400 musicians, singers, and dancers to the stage. The convention includes a number of workshops and classes as well.

The BBC has visited, recording and putting together a special on the convention. Every year visitors from Ireland, Australia, England, Germany, Japan, Canada, and other nations show up.

And the big prize for the thousands who attend the annual gathering is to simply be around hundreds, maybe more than a thousand, musicians and fans from all around the world.

At one end of the complex is the competition stage, where musicians of all ages and abilities test their work against others, often before an appreciative audience of family, friends, and music fans. Nearby is a dance stage, where folks can engage in a little bit of clogging or flat-footin when the spirit strikes.

And, of course, there are dozens upon dozens



Dom Flemons, of the Grammy Award-winning former group The Carolina Chocolate Drops, has even turned up at the Mount Airy fiddlers convention. (Tom Joyce | Simply Mayberry)

MAYBERRY FARM FEST

Saturday, May 18th
9am-6pm



TRACTOR PARADE

Friday, May 17th 6pm

Presented by



Mayberry Cool Cars & Rods Cruise In

Sundays

May 19th | June 16th | July 21st
August 18th | September 15th



Saturday,
September 14th
10am-8pm



A group of musicians from five different states put together a jam session, playing music, sharing stories and telling a few jokes along the way. They are, clockwise, starting with the standing guitar player in the foreground, Danny Knicely of Lovettsville, Virginia, Steve Staneslau, Billy Hurt from Boones Mill, Virginia, Tom Mindty from Maryland, Colby Helms from Boones Mill, Donnie Dobro (standing in the background) from Mount Airy, Willie Marschner from Northern Virginia, Dany Bureau from Connecticut, and Bremen Ernst from Philadelphia. Also playing with the group but just outside the photo frame is Ettore Guzzini from Mooresville during the 2021 convention. (Tom Joyce | Simply Mayberry)

of campsites and temporary tent shelters set up. Walking across the field there, one finds jam session after jam session, musicians from all walks of life — and from different parts of the country — joining together for impromptu jam sessions.

They play, they laugh, they pause, tell stories or talk of common friends they have, then start up again, the music wafting across the field, mixing with scores of similar jam sessions.

Many who attend say the event is like a big family reunion — they look forward to the annual Mount

Airy gathering to see friends they may not have seen since last year's convention. Other times, it's a place where many meet new friends — some destined to become lifelong friends.

But always, the music is what really brings folks to the convention, in the shadow of the nearby Blue Ridge Mountains.

"We used to go to Union Grove," said Butch Bost, who was strumming his guitar with friend Kenny Garren, who was playing a banjo, during one of those makeshift jam sessions during the 2022 convention.



Twelve-year-old Margo MacSweeney, of Floyd, Va., plays her banjo during the youth competition in the 2022 convention. She is accompanied by her instructor, Mac Traynham, also of Floyd. (Tom Joyce | Simply Mayberry)



Not everyone at the convention is a musician. Here, a family from Cary, N.C., came to Mount Airy in 2022 just to sit in and listen to the concerts and competitions. Pictured are Tom Weierick and his wife Jenn, along with their children Juliet, Veronica, and Genevieve. (Tom Joyce | Simply Mayberry)



Contestants line up near the convention stage during the 2016 convention. (Tom Joyce | Simply Mayberry)

At Union Grove, over the Memorial Day weekend, tens of thousands of musicians and fans would often gather, but over the years those crowds dwindled, and about a decade ago the festival closed down.

“We’ve had friends who used to go to Union Grove who come here, to Mount Airy,” he said, adding that they had encouraged Bost and Garren to visit the Granite City.

“He finally retired,” Bost said, motioning toward his lifelong friend, Garren. So, the two, who live in Fuquay-Varina, decided to visit the Mount Airy fiddlers’ convention this year.

“We’ll be back,” he said, adding the two had been impressed with the atmosphere and the musicians in Mount Airy.

“We just saw it advertised online,” said Tom Weierick. He and his wife, Jenn, were sitting among music fans during the same 2022 convention, while their three children — Genevieve, Veronica and Juliet — took turns sitting in their laps, crawling down to play, and climbing along the bleachers.

The family, from Cary, drove in Friday evening to take in the concert that night and the rest of the convention on Saturday. “We just thought we’d drive up and see it,” he said. “It’s been really great. We’ve enjoyed it.”



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While most Andy Griffith Show fans know many aspects of Mayberry were based on Mount Airy, early episodes of the show left open the question of where the town was located. While Andy Griffith wanted the town to be in North Carolina, show creator and producer Sheldon Leonard wanted it to be just a town in the South. Andy, apparently, had other ideas -- showing off a copy of The Mount Airy news as a prop during one scene of the show.

THINK MAYBERRY ALWAYS WAS IN NORTH CAROLINA? *Not so fast...*

Randy Turner

Simply Mayberry Magazine

Every fan of “The Andy Griffith Show,” from the devout to the most casual, knows that Mayberry is located in North Carolina. But when the classic series first began, that was not the case.

“The Andy Griffith Show” was created by Sheldon Leonard, the hugely successful television producer in the 1950s and 60s who also acted, wrote, and directed. In fact, Leonard directed the first episode of the series as well as the iconic opening credits of the show.

As I discuss in my book “Mayberry Firsts,” Leonard felt strongly that it would be more appealing to the American viewing public to think of Mayberry as undoubtedly a Southern town but one whose location is not in a particular state. Whether this is

true is debatable, though the continued success of the series in later years would seem to make clear that the public was not bothered by a specific state finally being mentioned.

Series star Andy Griffith based Mayberry in part on his hometown of Mount Airy, North Carolina. He also cited other influences, such as Chapel Hill, where he attended college, and Manteo, where he maintained a house, and where he got his start in the outdoor drama “The Lost Colony.” Both of those locations are also in his home state of North Carolina. So Andy did not think it would be an issue to make clear to viewers that Mayberry was in the Tarheel state.

At first, Andy referenced the town of Pilot Mountain, which is near Mount Airy, but he acquiesced to Leonard and called it Mount Pilot instead. As time went on, he started inserting the unaltered names of other North Carolina towns.

Griffith recalled, “At first, Sheldon didn’t want



From left are Margaret Kerry as Bess Muggins, Sam Edwards as Sam Muggins, Elinor Donahue as Ellie Walker, and Andy Griffith as Andy Taylor, singing during the Christmas Story episode. The courthouse and county jail, where this scene took place, had no designation as to what state Mayberry was located in, by design.

it to be in North Carolina. He just wanted it to be somewhere in the South. And I hate these made-up names. So we did have Mount Pilot which there is a place called Pilot Mountain up near Mount Airy. But I gradually started slipping in real towns in North Carolina like Asheville and Raleigh and Siler City. And so it became, during that first year, it became a town in North Carolina.”

Griffith’s recollection is obviously correct but while he thought it had been made clear that Mayberry was in North Carolina, it still was not stated to be so at first. In fact, there were several examples of that not being the town’s official location.

For example, Raleigh is referenced several times during the first season. It is where Rose Blake went to get her new set of dentures and the subject of guitar player Jim Lindsey’s hit record “Rock and Roll Rosie from Raleigh.” But it is never identified as the same Raleigh that is the capital of North Carolina.

Instead, the state capital is intentionally not referred to as Raleigh. In the first season episode “Andy and the Gentleman Crook,” the State Police are headquartered simply in “the capital” with no reference to Raleigh. The next season, in the episode “Andy and Barney in the Big City,” Andy and Barney travel to “Capital City” instead of Raleigh to meet with the head of the State Budget Committee for Sheriff Departments to request additional funding. The script even capitalized Capital City as if it was a proper name. Nearly another year later, when the state governor’s car is ticketed by Barney for a parking violation in “Barney and the Governor,” the license plate was altered so as not to read clearly as North Carolina. It instead reads “Noth Capolnja.”

References to real cities in North Carolina continued to be used in scripts. But the first specific

confirmation that Mayberry was in North Carolina did not occur until Season 4! In the 1964 episode “Prisoner of Love,” when the beautiful, unnamed prisoner is brought to the Mayberry Jail, the officers escorting her have arm badges on their uniforms which clearly read “North Carolina.” (This was also the first time the uniforms shown for a state officer were accurate, matching the actual uniforms worn in North Carolina.)

Another nonverbal confirmation occurred that season in “Aunt Bee’s Romance.” In the episode, Aunt Bee receives a letter from her old beau, Roger Hanover, with an address that is partially obstructed but appears to read “Miss Beatrice Taylor, Mayberry, North Carolina.”

Most fans are surprised to learn that the first time Mayberry was verbally stated to be in North Carolina did not occur until the sixth season, the first to be broadcast in color! Perhaps in an effort to have more on an “event” as an audience draw now that Don Knotts was no longer a regular in the series, a story arc was used that had the Taylor family travel to Hollywood to see part of the filming of a movie based loosely on Andy’s career as a sheriff titled “Sheriff Without a Gun.”

In “The Taylors in Hollywood,” when Andy, Opie, and Aunt Bee have just arrived in Hollywood, they ride a bus on the way to the hotel. A bus driver who has just gotten off duty is seated behind them on the bus and overhears their conversation about the way some women dress in California. After Opie comments he saw another “grown-up lady in trousers,” and Aunt Bee adds the woman was also wearing gold shoes, Andy comments it seems all right but he would hate to see it in Mayberry. The off-duty bus driver asks, “Mayberry? You folks aren’t from Mayberry, North Carolina?” It turns out he is from Ruby Creek, another town in North Carolina.

So, while Andy Griffith viewed Mayberry as having been in North Carolina all along, this was not made clear to the public at first and was never verbally stated to be so during any of the first five black-and-white seasons.

Randy Turner is the author of Mayberry Firsts and The Mayberry Travel Guide. He is the editor of and a contributor to 60 Years of Mayberry and creator of the Mayberry Day-by-Day desk calendar. He presents popular audio-visual presentations at Mayberry Days and is the founder of The Andy Griffith Show Ambassadors Program. Information can be found at www.mayberrybooks.com.

Simple HAPPENINGS in 2024-25

Your guide to live concerts, shows, and other entertainment in Mount Airy and the surrounding communities. For additional information on all Surry Arts Council Summer Concert Series shows, performances at The Historic Earle Theatre, or shows at The Andy Griffith Playhouse, please see <http://www.surryarts.org/surryart/index.html>.

CONCERTS & EVENTS

Note: For tickets to all concerts that are part of the Surry Arts Council Summer Concert Series or the Blue Ridge and Beyond Series, or to purchase season tickets, visit <https://www.surryarts.org/shows/menu.html>, or call 336-786-7998. Season ticket prices, good for admission to any or all of the summer concert series shows at the Blackmon Amphitheatre, are \$160. Tickets for individual Summer Concert Series tickets are \$17, with children 12 and younger admitted free. Prices vary for the Blue Ridge And Beyond series. Concessions are on sale at each of the Summer Concert Series shows.

JUNE

1
Chocolate Chip & Company
7:30 p.m.

Blackmon Amphitheatre in Mount Airy

Part of the Surry Arts Council Summer Concert Series, Chocolate Chip & Company is providing funky heat and making it look all so cool. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

1
Caleb Caulde performing with Wild Ponies
7 p.m.

Blue Ridge Music Center's Amphitheatre in Galax, VA
Tickets: \$20, Free for Ages 12 & Younger

Caleb Caulde is a thoughtful alt-country singer while Wild Ponies is a country-roots duo known for their intimate, personal concerts. Take a chair or blanket to sit on. You may take a cooler or picnic basket, but no alcohol please. Concerts are held rain or shine. Assistive listening devices are available for use during concerts. If you would like to borrow a free device, email info@blueridgemusiccenter.org in advance of your visit.

6
The Tonez
7:30 p.m.
Blackmon Amphitheatre in Mount Airy

An eight-piece musical act that aims to keep crowds on their feet dancing and enjoying live music with its mix of oldies, Motown, rock & roll, country, funk, R&B, and beach music as part of the Summer Concert Series. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

7-8
Mount Airy Old Time and Blue Grass Fiddlers Convention
Veterans Memorial Park in Mount Airy
Tickets: \$10 each day, \$20 for entire weekend

Two days of blue grass, old time music, concerts, dancing, and competition, along with workshops by the Surry Arts Council. Contestant charges are \$20, with \$10 refunded after performance. For more information visit <https://www.surryarts.org/mafiddlersconvention/index.html>

7
Envision
7:30 p.m.
Blackmon Amphitheatre in Mount Airy
Bringing their cover of hits from the 60s, 70s and 80s, all the way up to the contemporary sound of today's Top 40, as part of the Summer Concert Series. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

8
Gary Lowder & Smokin' Hot
7:30 p.m.
Blackmon Amphitheatre in Mount Airy
Part of the Surry Arts Council Summer Concert Series. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

8
Chatham Rabbits
7 p.m.
Blue Ridge Music Center's Amphitheatre in Galax, VA
Steeped in the regional traditions of their North Carolina home, Chatham Rabbits' musical pursuits represent a new age of roots music as Austin and Sarah McCombie blend their personal histories through deft songwriting and a history that comes from building a life together. Tickets are \$25, free for ages 12 and younger. Take a chair or blanket to sit on. You may take a cooler or picnic basket, but no alcohol please. Concerts are held rain or shine. Assistive listening devices are available for use during concerts. If you would like to borrow a free device, email info@blueridgemusiccenter.org in advance of your visit.

13
Jim Quick and Coastline
7:30 p.m.

Blackmon Amphitheatre in Mount Airy

Part of the Summer Concert Series. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

14
The Entertainers
7:30 p.m.
Blackmon Amphitheatre in Mount Airy

The band is bringing their R&B and Beach Music to the stage. But, they are not limited to those genres, regularly diving into the latest Top 40 hits, classic rock & roll, and even country music in this Summer Concert Series. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

15
The Magnificents Band
7:30 p.m.
Blackmon Amphitheatre in Mount Airy
Part of the Surry Arts Council Summer Concert Series. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

15
The SteelDrivers along with The Wilder Flower
7 p.m.
Blue Ridge Music Center's Amphitheatre in Galax, VA
Tickets: \$40, \$20 Ages 12 & Younger

The SteelDrivers braid their bluegrass roots with new threads of their own design, bringing together country, soul, blues, and other contemporary influences. The Wilder Flower is an all-female trio which flexes between folk, Americana, bluegrass, and old-time, mixing vocally on three-part harmonies, old-time ballads, and modern melodies. Take a chair or blanket to sit on. You may take a cooler or picnic basket, but no alcohol please. Concerts are held rain or shine. Assistive listening devices are available for use during concerts. If you would like to borrow a free device, email info@blueridgemusiccenter.org in advance of your visit.



BAND OF OZ



MISSY RAINES ALLEGHENY



CHATHAM RABBITS



THE STEELDRIVERS

20

The Band of Oz
7:30 p.m.

Blackmon Amphitheatre
in Mount Airy

Part of the Summer Concert Series. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

21

The Konnection
7:30 p.m.

Blackmon Amphitheatre
in Mount Airy

Tabbed as one of the East Coast's premiere party bands, The Konnection will bring its high-octane show featuring a variety of music including Top 40, Rock, Country, R & B, Beach and Oldies as part of the Summer Concert Series show. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

22

The Holiday Band
7:30 p.m.

Blackmon Amphitheatre
in Mount Airy

Playing hits from the 1950s through today and blending genres such as Current & Classic Top 40, Soul, Funk, Rock & Roll, Motown, Jazz, and more, as part of the Summer Concert Series. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions will be available for purchase.

22

An Evening with Tuba Skinny
7 p.m.

Blue Ridge Music Center's
Amphitheatre in Galax, VA
Tickets: \$25, \$30 Day of Show,
\$10 Ages 12 & Younger

For more than a decade Tuba Skinny has grown steadily in popularity, releasing 12 albums and touring all over the world. Known as world-class interpreters of traditional jazz, they have also branched out into jug band music, spirituals, country blues, string band music, ragtime, and New Orleans R&B. Take a chair or blanket to sit on. You may take a cooler or picnic basket, but no alcohol please. Concerts are held rain or shine. Assistive listening devices are available for use during concerts. If you would like to borrow a free device, email info@blueridgemusiccenter.org in advance of your visit.

27

The Main Event Band
7:30 p.m.

Blackmon Amphitheatre
in Mount Airy

Part of the Summer Concert Series. The ultimate party band performing R&B, Soul, Beach, Country, and Funk. Their performances also include music styles from the 80s and 90s as well as today's favorite songs. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

28

The Extraordinaires
7:30 p.m.

Blackmon Amphitheatre
in Mount Airy

A unique, high-energy blend of Classics/ Rhythm & Blues music that aims to get people out of their seats and on the dance floor. As part of the Summer Concert Series, those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

29

Appalachian Road Show
along with None of the
Above
7 p.m.

Blue Ridge Music Center's
Amphitheatre in Galax, VA
Tickets: \$25, \$30 Day of Show,
\$10 Ages 12 & Younger

Appalachian Road Show brings new-generation interpretations of traditional Americana, bluegrass, and folk songs alongside innovative original music – all presented with a common thread tied directly to the heart of the Appalachian region. None of the Above works with traditional bluegrass instrumentation creating a unique sound that includes elements from bluegrass, Americana, alternative, folk, rock, and their own original material. Take a chair or blanket to sit on. You may take a cooler or picnic basket, but no alcohol please. Concerts are held rain or shine. Assistive listening devices are available for use during concerts. If you would like to borrow a free device, email info@blueridgemusiccenter.org in advance of your visit.

29

Phatt City
7:30 p.m.

Blackmon Amphitheatre
in Mount Airy

Bringing its own version of Beach Music, R & B Music, Soul Music, Blues Music, Motown Music, and Chicago Music in this Summer Concert Series show. Those attending are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions available for purchase.

WEEKLY EVENTS

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